Choose Beverages Wisely; Calories Can Add Up Quickly

According to a new analysis of government dietary data, Americans drink almost a quarter of our daily calories. Unfortunately, most Americans don’t compensate for high calorie beverages by cutting back on the calories from solid food.

Everyone has their own amount of calories they should consume. You can figure your specific calorie intake at http://mypyramid.gov.

Here is an example: When one determines they need 2,200 calories a day to maintain current weight, it is likely one will not count their beverages as part of that allotment. As a result, they could end up drinking an extra 550 calories (a quarter of 2,200) they didn’t plan to consume or didn’t count as part of their calorie consumption. An extra 550 calories is going to add to your waist-line quickly. (An extra 100 calories each day can turn into an extra 10 pounds per year.)

According to Carolyn O’Neil, RD “People just may not be aware of how these calories are sneaking into their diet... and not understanding what an impact it has on body weight.”

In one day, a typical American consumes:
- 38 ounces of water
- 17.5 ounces of sugar-sweetened beverages such as soft drinks and teas
- 8.9 ounces of coffee (which may also be sweetened)
- 7.5 ounces of milk

Soft drinks were found to be the source of 36% of all added sugars and 6.4% of total calories in the American diet.

A study done by Penn State and published in the Journal of the American Dietetic Association set out to answer the question: Do people balance extra liquid calories by reducing portion sizes on their plates or by eating less of the solid food they are served? The answer is a deafening No! Generally, participants didn’t curb their solid food consumption so when a soft drink was served, participants ate the same amount of food. Even more alarming is the bigger the beverage served, the more participants drank. This supports the idea that liquids are less filling than solid food, so you really need to think about your liquid consumption. It is the same idea as clean your plate, you will eat what is there – and you will drink what is in your glass, can or bottle.

To get control of your liquid calorie consumption:
- Switch to diet drinks - it is a good first step
- Choose Low-fat milk - it is important for calcium and vitamin D
- Best of all choose water - it is great for quenching your thirst with zero added calories